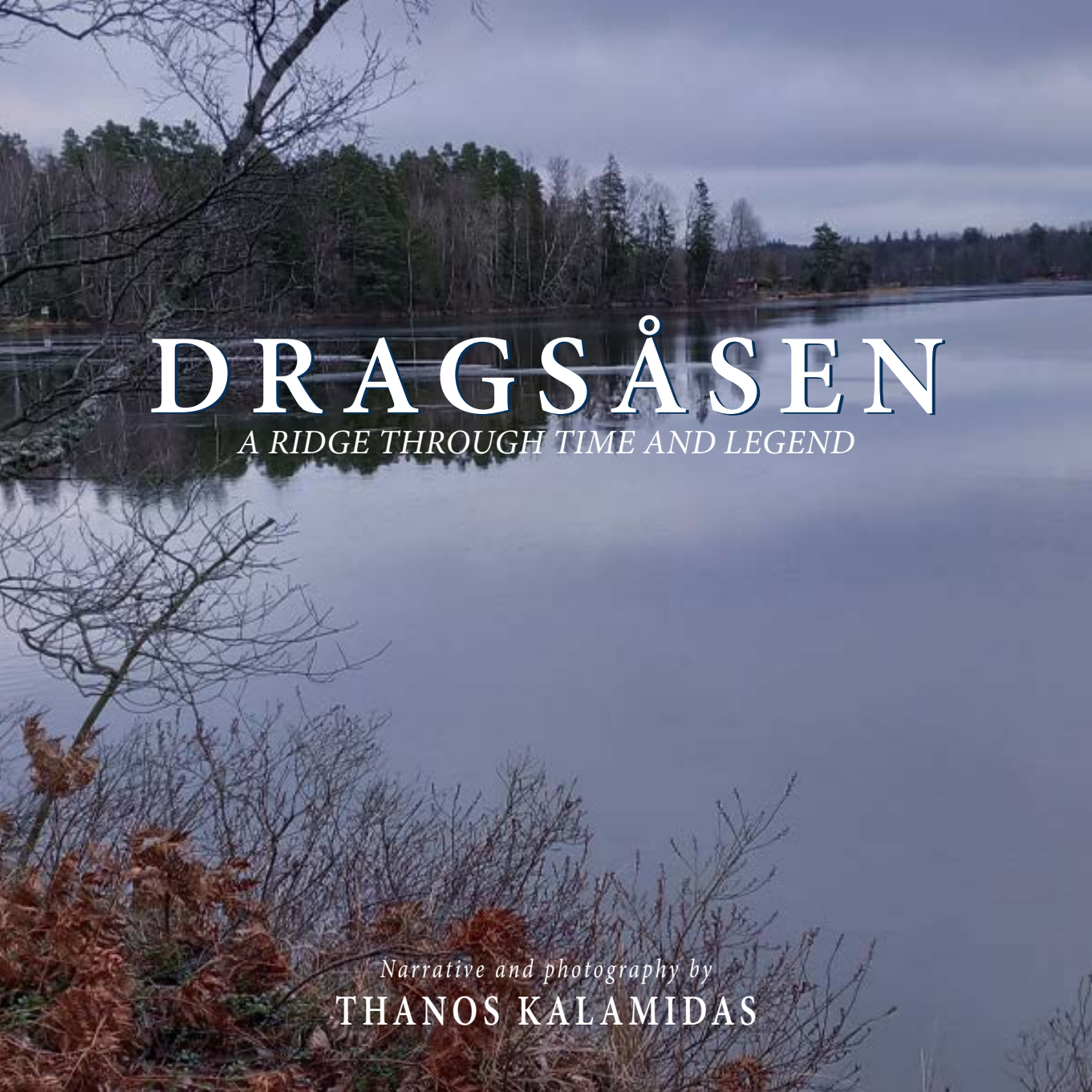

DRAGSÅSEN

A RIDGE THROUGH TIME AND LEGEND

Narrative and photography by

THANOS KALAMIDAS

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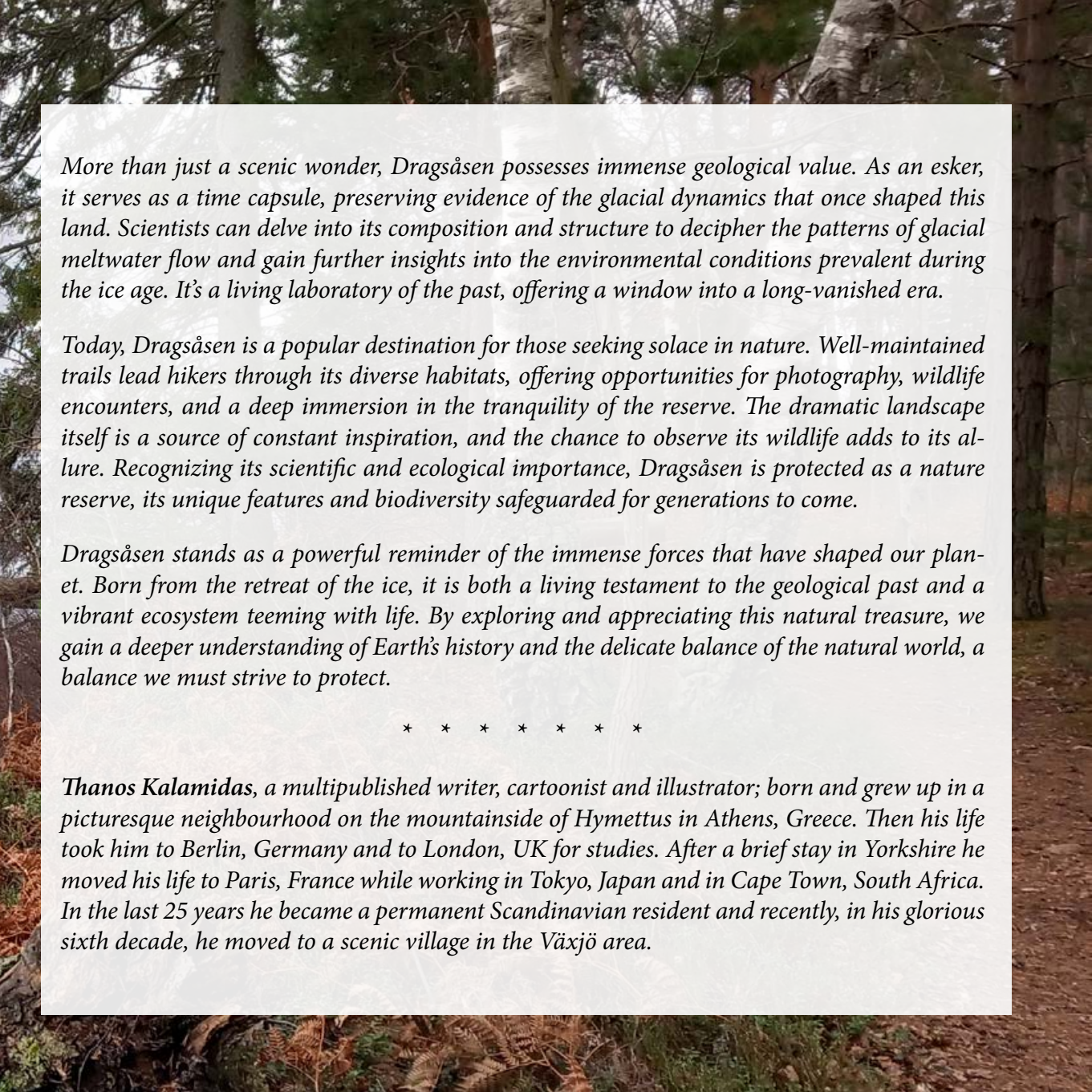
Dragsåsen, a ridge through time and legend

In the heart of Kronoberg County, Sweden, rises Dragsåsen, not a mountain peak but a striking esker; a long, sinuous ridge sculpted by the powerful forces of glacial meltwater during the last ice age. This geological marvel, composed of layers of sand and gravel, stands as a compelling testament to the region's dramatic past and a vibrant haven for nature today. Its very existence is a whisper of the vanished ice sheets that once dominated Scandinavia.

As massive glaciers retreated across the landscape, torrents of meltwater, carrying with them a heavy load of sediment, flowed beneath and around the ice. These subglacial streams often carved channels, sometimes even tunnels, within the ice itself. When the ice finally yielded to warmer temperatures, those channels collapsed, leaving behind the sinuous, elevated ridges we call eskers. Dragsåsen is a textbook example of this fascinating process, its steep slopes and narrow, winding crest a direct legacy of its glacial birth. Ascending the ridge, one is rewarded with breathtaking panoramas, with the surrounding lakes and forests unfolding like a tapestry below.

The unique topography of Dragsåsen creates a patchwork of microclimates, each fostering distinctive plant communities. The sun-drenched slopes, where the sandy soil drains quickly, are carpeted in heathland vegetation, a riot of hardy grasses and low-lying shrubs. In contrast, the cooler, sheltered pockets nurture the dense canopies of coniferous forests, offering refuge from the elements. This diversity of habitats teems with life. A symphony of birdsong fills the air, from the drumming of woodpeckers to the hooting of owls and the soaring flights of raptors. Mammals, including red and roe deer and wild boar, roam within its boundaries, and the shimmering lakes that cradle the ridge provide vital habitats for a wealth of fish and aquatic life.



More than just a scenic wonder, Dragsåsen possesses immense geological value. As an esker, it serves as a time capsule, preserving evidence of the glacial dynamics that once shaped this land. Scientists can delve into its composition and structure to decipher the patterns of glacial meltwater flow and gain further insights into the environmental conditions prevalent during the ice age. It's a living laboratory of the past, offering a window into a long-vanished era.

Today, Dragsåsen is a popular destination for those seeking solace in nature. Well-maintained trails lead hikers through its diverse habitats, offering opportunities for photography, wildlife encounters, and a deep immersion in the tranquility of the reserve. The dramatic landscape itself is a source of constant inspiration, and the chance to observe its wildlife adds to its allure. Recognizing its scientific and ecological importance, Dragsåsen is protected as a nature reserve, its unique features and biodiversity safeguarded for generations to come.

Dragsåsen stands as a powerful reminder of the immense forces that have shaped our planet. Born from the retreat of the ice, it is both a living testament to the geological past and a vibrant ecosystem teeming with life. By exploring and appreciating this natural treasure, we gain a deeper understanding of Earth's history and the delicate balance of the natural world, a balance we must strive to protect.

* * * * * * *

***Thanos Kalamidas**, a multipublished writer, cartoonist and illustrator; born and grew up in a picturesque neighbourhood on the mountainside of Hymettus in Athens, Greece. Then his life took him to Berlin, Germany and to London, UK for studies. After a brief stay in Yorkshire he moved his life to Paris, France while working in Tokyo, Japan and in Cape Town, South Africa. In the last 25 years he became a permanent Scandinavian resident and recently, in his glorious sixth decade, he moved to a scenic village in the Växjö area.*

The January wind, sharp as shattered glass, scoured the surface of Dragsåsen Lake. It was no ordinary ice-sheet; it was a mirror reflecting not the sky, but the petrified dreams of a forgotten age. Beneath the frozen transparency, skeletal fish swam in slow-motion, their silver scales dull with the weight of the perpetual winter.

The lake itself a vast, icy eye, its gaze fixed on a woodland that seemed to hold its breath in perpetual anticipation. The trees, gaunt and skeletal against the pale sky, were not made of wood, but of calcified bone. Their branches, gnarled and twisted, were like the arthritic fingers of giants, reaching out to grasp the last remnants of summer's warmth, a warmth that existed only as a faint, dusty memory.

This woodland was not a place of life at the moment; it was a museum of stillness, a shrine to the slow, agonizing slumber of the green world. Each tree was a tombstone, etching stories of sunlight and rain onto its stony bark. No birds sang, no squirrels chattered; only the occasional groan of the ice, a sound like the moans of slumbering behemoths, broke the profound silence.

The snow, too, was different here, not soft and welcoming, but a brittle, crystalline crust that crunched underfoot like the bones of small, forgotten creatures. It was a landscape where time had ceased to flow, where the past, present, and future were all trapped within the unyielding grip of the frost.

And then there was the Fallen One. He wasn't a tree, not anymore. He was a jagged scar across the landscape, a sprawling figure of petrified sorrow. Once, he had stood tall and proud, his branches reaching for the unyielding sky, his roots drinking deeply from the earth's hidden veins. But the frost, insidious and tireless, had finally conquered him. He lay on his side, his broken limbs reaching out in a final, desperate embrace of the cold earth. He was a monument to defeat, a somber testament to the futility of life against the relentless march of winter.

However, the Fallen One was not entirely dead. Within his petrified heartwood, a faint, rhythmic pulse could be felt, a slow, deliberate thrum that echoed the heartbeat of the dormant world. This pulse was not of life as one understood it, but a different kind of existence, one that existed beyond the reach of the sun and the gentle touch of the thaw. It was a whisper of hope, a fragile spark in the vast expanse of frozen despair.

Every creak of his calcified limbs, every shard of icy bark that broke off, was a tiny act of defiance against the overwhelming power of the frost. He was a silent rebel, a stubborn refusal to be completely consumed by the endless winter.

The other trees, the stony sentinels of the forest, surrounded him in a silent vigil. Their branches, rigid and unyielding, formed a protective circle, as though they were guarding his secrets, his dormant dreams. They were not mourning him; they were acknowledging his struggle, his unwavering will to resist the encroaching darkness.

They understood that it was not death, but a transformation, a metamorphosis into something that winter could not conquer. They had all been young once, vibrant, alive. They had felt the sun warm their leaves, the rain soak their roots. Now they were something else, something more. They were the keepers of the ice, the guardians of the stillness.

And as the bitter wind howled across the frozen lake, the Fallen One stirred within his stony prison. His pulse became a little stronger, the thrum a little more insistent. He was not reclaiming his old form, but evolving into something new, something that belonged to this frozen realm. His roots, reaching into the icy earth, were not searching for nourishment, but anchoring him in this silent landscape, becoming part of the glacial tapestry. And each breath, if one could call it that, was not of air but of the glacial ice, infusing him with the power of the frozen world.

He was no longer a Fallen Tree. He was something else, something ancient and powerful, a dormant titan waiting for a thaw that might never come. He was the heart of the frozen lake, the soul of the calcified forest, a symbol of resilience in the face of absolute adversity. He was a reminder that even in the deepest winter, the seeds of change, however subtle, are always present beneath the surface of the ice, ready to burst forth when the time is right, or perhaps, never.

The story of the Dragsåsen Lake and its frozen forest was a story of silence, stillness, and the defiant heartbeat of the Fallen One, a story whispered on the wind, etched into the ice, and carried deep within the heart of those who dared to look beyond the surface. It was a tale of a different kind of life, a life born of ice and stone, a life that defied all understanding.

Thanos Kalamidas

Dragsåsen
a ridge through time and legend

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